632 Since the town attracted the most clever "däbtära",
[709] many of whom were herbologists, it was also a center where "medical aid", sometimes quite effective, could be obtained, and attracted patients from far and wide.

[463] Ethnic craftsmen would settle in hamlets within walking distance of the town, to provide iron tools, tanned leather, sun umbrellas, etc., without, however, exposing themselves to mockery, insults and occasional assaults by living in the town itself.

632 517 The town developed as a social center, and center for entertainment, almost inevitably. First, religious feasts such as the Epiphany parades and the tournaments on the public commons on "ganna" (Christmas) attracted the populace; and youngsters as well as adult loafers found themarket scenes fascinating. Secndly, the Arab traders liked to discuss business and news over tea or coffee. So "teahouses " (shay bet") sprang up near the Saturday market, serving snacks also to many a male at odds with his wife, and excluding all womenfolk. Conversely, the mead house, ("tej bet") provided evening entertainment with female singers and dancers (azmari) for the all-male clientele, and waitresses easily available for sexual entertainment. Moreover, every town had at least one "street of unattached women", who catered to travellers or visiting peasants as innkeepers, restaurateurs, and as temporary wives; they were usually divorcees, who hoped to find another husband, and to settle down again to regular married life.

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632 178 Except for some of the feudal arrangements, most of this town pattern of social organization is still

671 Despite its apparent and proclaimed orthodoxy, occasional amendments, either in theory or practice or both, have been made through royal decrees or common-law usage. For example, concubinage has long been practiced, [588] sometimes in the form of "dämoz" marriage, which evades the Fetha Nagast by giving the woman the status of "hired servant" receiving a periodic "wage", and in this form the practice is at present legally recognized even in the new, modern laws decreed by the present emperor.

In fact, the "Fetha Nägäst" contains an "elastic clause", which has been rediscovered under the present regime, and is cited as justification for the new, European-patterned laws which upset the ultra-conservatives. This clause advises: "Act according to your observation of the c nditions of times and seasons". This was quoted in the new Penal Code of 1930.

681 However, in the past, the draconic aspects of the criminal law in particular were most literally interpreted by many kin chiefs and feudal lords up to the beginning of the present emperor's regime. The hand of a thief was cut off, and in case of armed robbery both a hand and a foot. Rebels were similarly punished. If a person took the usual oath, "by the life of the King" and was found to have perjured himself, his tongue could be cut out. An insult to the king could be punished by blinding. A father had the right of life and death over [543 567] his children--but not over his Christianized slaves. The latter were further protected against being sold, the penalty for which offense could be the hanging of the master.

563 567 "Barya" people below the northwest escarpment, so that both terms became synonymous with "slave". Because of the negroid features of the former, and the very black skin of both, they had high visibility, and did not have to be guarded closely as they could hardly escape. In view of the widespread illiteracy, manumission was almost never practiced, and such a document would be ignored by a slave trader or any Amhara who wanted to re-enslave a manumitted Shanqalla or Barya. Until slave-trading was prohibited by the present emperor, negroid slaves were still brought from the Gumuz tribe of Quara sub-province, just below the western, old-Amhara escarpment. But concubinage was so widespread 588 that today there are more half-Shanqalla than full-blooded ex-slaves. Freed only since 1942, little change has so far taken place in their social status. In rural areas most remain with their old masters as 564 servants or sharecroppers. In towns, they form a pool ofunskilled labor, employed only briefly from time to time, subsisting on very little, residing in the oldest parts of theold Muslim ghetto. Some of their women have 567 managed to raise their economic status by becoming house-maids, espceially serving the women on the "street of unattached girls", or by mar ying ploygynous Muslims.

563 567 797 The Coptic church had not interested itself in the status of slaves, for according to its rules a Christian could not be kept in slavery, and therefore no attempt was made to convert Shanqalla or Barya slaves.

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1. The Beginning of Life.

842 A. The Desire for Children: adoption.

Children are greatly desired by the Amhara, and a childless home is regarded as under a heavenly curse. Children are regarded as continuing the "byet", the residential extended family; as a source of riches from childhood on when they begin economic tasks; as a source of comfort and security in old age; as defenders in feuds and wars; even after the death of parents, children help them into heaven by means of "läsäkar".

588 When a woman is barren, and amulets have proven no cure for her, she may give her husband a concubine, "gäräd" (lit. servant maid), so that he will not feel deprived of fatherhood and begin 597 to hate her. Or she may adopt a child, preferably an orphan of kinfolk or a well-known family, by taking the child to the confessor-priest and swearing the oath of ecclesiastical adoption, whereupon the child becomes "yägal kidan laj" (lit. contract-child). This may include the ceremony of "breast-mother", "yäṭut ənnat", previously described. Less fortunate is the foster child, not formally adopted, who lives with the foster parents, guards the crops and herds the cows, but is more completely dependent on the good will of the "bread mother", "ənjära ənnat".

593 Fathers, whether natural or adopted, expect complete obedience from their children, particularly after they have arrived at the "age of reason". Fathers feel defensively obliged to maintain their authority; as the proverbs say of a father addressing the 593 son:

539 "Sheep! If I do not eat you, you would devour me", said the hyena". (meaning: perhaps you'd

583 585 1) the eucharistic church marriage, "qurban", engaged in only by a minority, such as some of the nobility, some of the elder persons, and all of the priesthood; 2) the kin-negotiated ("civil") marriage, "semanya", sworn before the cheqa shum headman, and most [588] common; 3) the temporary marriage, for which the man engages to pay regular housekeeping wages, "damox", especially common among those who travel to markets.

585 "Semanya" literally means "80", and is thus also called the "eighty-bond marriage". This refers to the oath which includes the phrase "May the Emperor die", perjury against which used to be penalized by what was then the enormous sum of 80 Maria Theresa Thalers. It is also called "bäserat", by"contract"). This is the most common form of marriage, dominated by a complexity of kinship arrangements (described in detail below), and divorce is possible through similar negotiations and "parcelling out" of both goods and children. There is a minimum of individual emphasis in this marriage negotiation, especially in a first marriage, for the kin of both sides must be satisfied and "honored", though there is some element of original choice through informal courtship. The church takes cognizance by sending a priest to bless the couple.

"Qurbān" marriage is not urged by the church on laymen, partly because of the sacerdotal character of the church, partly because the eucharistic sacraments are considered so holy that only serious, [586] mature, fully adult persons are advised to engage in it, and divorce cannot be granted. At this sacrament, the couple is rebaptised, and [587] may, on all church holy days, wear the "aklil" crown. Widows and widowers may remarry, but a priest who becomes a widower is expected to assume monkhood. The priest who blesses a "semanya"

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585 bride and groom merely expresses the prayerful wish that "God will show the way" to the lay couple toward "qurban", in time. In fact, middle-aged couples who have gone through several divorces and have finally decided definitely to spend the rest of their days together, may take the "aklil" in "qurban". Qurban for lay people, e.g. deacons, is performed usually only 40 days after their "semanya", to make certain that their marriage bond is strong and real and that no rift has arisen (e.g. if the bride had been found not a virgin).

588 487 "Damot" marriage (lit. wage) is what the term implies. Most commonly the arrangement is from month to month, but may be for longer or shorter periods, such as the duration of a caravan trip, or an extended stay at a major market, where the "damot" wife offers the best and often the only available hotel and restaurant services. (She is similar to the Biblical lady in the city of Jericho). The term is a contraction of "dammwag" (lit. "blood - and - sweat") compensation. Her wages vary greatly from region to region, and have considerably increased in recent years, for even the new, modern law recognized her claim. In the past she did well if she received ETH$5.-per month in addition to housekeeping expenses, but now some obtain ETH$20.- from traders. The agreement is made orally but before witnesses, so that she can go to court if the man defaults on his payments. If they separate at the expiration of the contract, she has no right to half his property as does the semanya wife, but if there are children conceived during her contract, the children can make a claim for part of the father's inheritance should he die.

588 The "damoz" temporary wife is usually recruited from a lower class than that of the man, of landless family. But often she is merely a divorcee, who "lives alone" in a street inhabited by women of similar status in the town, who are in-between marriages, and make a living serving transients with bed and board, giving them the comforts of home, cooking, baking, cleaning. They are not considered good-time prostitutes of the mead-houses ("tej-byet"), and are therefore much more respected.

588 487 178 Respectably-married ("semanya") man would, in the past, take on a "damoz" wife to accompany them on caravan trips, to spare the "semanya" wife the discomforts and perils of the journey. Now that trucks travel comparatively fast from province to province, the travelling "damoz" wife has become rare, but the residential "damoz" wife continues in the towns much as before, and "semanya" wives are therefore not as tolerant of them as they once were when they appreciated their husbands' efforts to spare them discomfort. For, they reasoned, "who else will cook for him, how will he eat?".

588 848 The "damoz" wife's children are fully legitimate. She is far higher in status than the simple concubine ("yachen ̈ared", lit. the servant-maid of the thigh), who was and is often a permanent member of the household, often of doubtful or half-Shanqalla ancestry, who has no damoz rights, and whose children have no rights of recognition beyond what the master cares to give them. (The concubine is also called "tara" or "tarata" in some districts).

588 171 The respectability or semi-respectability of the "damoz" wife compares to the Persian "sesghe", and the Arab Muslim temporary wife permitted in the Quran (IV:28 - "And in so far as you have derived pleasure from these women for a stipulated time, give them their

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588 rewards as agreed upon") practiced by the Shi'ites in particular.
171 (footnote 81). The Abyssinian Coptic "Fetha Nagast" forbids concubinage; but the custom has long been widespread. "Damoz" is even recognised in the modern law of Emperor Haile Selassie.

551 Individual arrangements are freest in "damoz", also in "qurbam"
585 though sometimes less so, and least in "semanya". But in all three forms of marriage, the wife retains her maiden name and does not assume that of her husband. Even Empress Menen continues her old name. Sometimes the husband's mother may try to symbolise her authority - or even affection - by giving a new name to her new daughter-in-law living in her hamlet, but the bride's kinfolk and
[600] peers will continue to use her old name. This is another, unconscious, emphasis of kinship relations over affinal ones.

588 The "damoz" is not considered contradictory to monogamy, which may explain her respectability despite prohibition of concubinage in the "Fetha Nagast" code. Religious persons will explain the paradox away by quoting from Genesis "be fruitful and multiply".

583 In rural districts there is sometimes found a 4th form of
184 marriage, which indeed is re-enacted in some wedding ceremonies of "semanya". This form is bride capture, especially found among families too poor to defray the expenses of a wedding and cows that must be given the "semanya" couple. To cover up the shame and the poverty, the bride is "captured" and "pursued", by pre-arranged collusion. While she ostensibly goes, alone, to fetch water or gather deadwood, the groom's "mize" appear suddenly, preferably on horseback, and carry her off into the bush, while she, though ex-

Footnote 81: Donaldson, D.M.: Temporary Marriage in Iran. Moslem World, 1936, pp. 358-364. Smith, W. Robertson: Kinship and Marriage in early Arabia, 1885.

587 knowing both, has preferred her!

[588] A deserted wife, angry that her husband has found another, will often take a lover to buy her "a sheep for Epiphany", butter for her hair, and cotton for her distaff.

578 587 The following relationships are called "gobban", rivals, to each other:

"Semanya" versus "damoz" wife;

Man A, whose divorced wife lives with man B. The men are "gobban".

Woman X, whose divorced husband lives with, or married, woman Y.

"Semanya" and "damoz" wives, versus new concubine, "gäräd", fearing permanency.

One "gäräd" against another, (also called "wushemma").

But only "semanya" wives are regarded as legal rivals.

842 586 When a woman is barren, she may follow the biblical example and ask her husband to take a servant girl, "gäräd" to have children with her. A "semanya" wife may be divorced on grounds of barrenness, but "with honor", taking half of their communal property with her. Amhara peasants believe that women become barren in the towns be-

[588] cause of "loose living". A woman divorced on grounds of barrenness will often have sexual intercourse with many men, hoping that she will conceive and thus have the blame of barrenness taken from her.

848 A bastard, "dicala" has full inheritance rights if his father acknowledges him. Bastards are believed to be of violent tempers, like "Muhammad Gran" (the Galla Muslim chief who devastated much of Ethiopia in the 16th century, reputedly a bastard).

586 When suing for divorce, either partner appeals to the "mänfäs qubä" (colloquially "mänfäs aqway"), the "soul-counselor" priest, who has jurisdiction even over "semanya" marriages. Only he can

B. Sex in Amhara Culture.

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548 The extension of the concept of "temporary wife" to prostitution has already been touched upon in connection with the entertainment aspect of sex. It is this extension which imposes on this activity a character-pattern, involving the "unattached woman's" hoping to find husband, meanwhile serving transient travellers with food, shelter, and even some wifely affect. In return for this partial constraint, the culture pattern rewards the "unattached woman" prostitute with certain minimal respectability. She may actually break the curse of barrenness of a first marriage by bearing a child, and thus finding it easier to find another husband. She also has the chance to experiment in sex, learning from travellers, and teaching the local townsmen and peasants. Most terms meaning prostitute are therefore matter-of-fact, and not insulting ("shärmuta" - the most polite reference, regarded as an Arabic loanword; "qälïnota"; "ämänsera" (lit. recipient of the seed); "läsärbäqa" (lit. "to the whole country", public woman). However, references to "loose personality, e.g. "läsässeya syet" are insulting.

834 A strong constraint placed on the temporary wife - prostitute, as on any other Amhara, is against her sexual intercourse with a Muslim. Infraction of this rule would bring immediate and severe ostracism. Since many of her potential clients are travelling traders, many of whom are Muslims, the temptation is strong to ignore that rule. But if she does, she can seek reinstatement in Amhara-Coptic society, which she is considered to have renounced in consummating a union with a Muslim, by appealing penitently to her confessor, who may then agree to re-baptise her, which is considered necessary.. This will lift the ban of ostracism against her, on her social level.

This religious ban against sexual intercourse with a non-Copt

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587 The proverb says:

[539] "He who knows not how to kiss,
his nose he will blow on you."

The divorcée often develops strategy and techniques to win a man of her choice: She may give him a ring to remind him of her when he is away from her; when he visits her, she feeds him "ergo" (thick buttermilk), so he will be sleepy and remain at her house, rather than go to his men friends to gamble. Women have a proverb about men:

[539] "Like a child, (he is attracted) by the ring,
like a cat, (he is attracted) by milk."

If she has a mother who is a good cook, the divorcee will employ this attraction, saying:

[539] "More than the flesh of the daughter,
(he is attracted by)
the butter (i.e. cooking) of the mother."

[832] When this fails, she may enlist the supernatural aid of love amulets, "mistafaqer", purchased from the dabtära scribe with the man's name inscribed, to inspire love for her in him; and in addition to the fee, may treat the dabtara to beer and sweets to enlist his greatest power on her behalf.

588 If her lover is already married, she may nevertheless establish a "sweetheart" ("yusherra") relationship with him, though she has no claim on "danoz" wages or recognition of this temporary wifehood. This is also one of the few cases in which a woman will try not to have children.

548 588 However, a divorcee who was divorced largely on account of her barrenness - and about 25% of the townswomen are barren at least for some years - will try to have a child, even out of wedlock. She will then very likely join the "unattached women" in the streets inhabited

548 588 by them in the towns. Divorcees who are young and still attractive often do not want to return to their kinfolk, especially if they have seen town life and the kin life in remote rural hamlets. Like men doing manual labor, she may go to another district or even province to avoid shaming them. On this street she will usually begin by brewing daily barley beer, or even expand this to a small restaurant-inn performing the housekeeping tasks which she has been taught since early childhood and which are the only trade she knows. Occasionally she will then take in a travelling trader for 3 days or more, cook and bake and brew beer for him, also sleep with him if he desires. She hopes, not rarely with success, that one or the other will make the relationship permanent.

831 Men take great pride in virility, but also in sexual technique. They liken the activity to expertly "riding a horse" ("afärräsä" lit. he rode her like a horse, is used for "defloration"). Men believe that [842] it is frequency of intercourse, each night or several times each night, that brings conception. The popular, vulgar name for coitus is "bädda" (related to "bädäbbädä", he beat, whipped; shook with fever). Variations in sexual technique are referred to as "mtt" (lit. hits). An impotent male is mocked as "alecha" (lit. sauce without pepper).

There is a sharp distinction between references that are "rude", consisting of direct references to sexual organs and activities; and veiled language used to refer to such matters, if at all, before an elder, priest, or upper-class person. The former is referred to as "yäsäfär gal" (lit. light matters), connoting "shameful matters". This includes such direct names as "gola" for penis ("jälla" is even more vulgar), "yägola ferey" (lit. fruit of the penis) for testicles, "set" for vulva. Curiously enough, overt loud expression of these terms are heard only from little boys, e.g. when, during the rainy season, they